

Intro:

XV. Testing the Spirits

A. Becoming Discerning

1. OT and NT full of warnings about
 - a. false teachers - **Deut 13:1-3; Isa 8:19-20; Mt 7:15; 24:4-5,11,24; Acts 20:29**
 - b. their doctrine - **De 13:2; Acts 20:30; 1 Ti 1:4-7,19; 6:20-21; 2 Ti 2:17-18;**
2. Believers must be discerning
 - a. lest they be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting - Eph 4:14
 - b. Paul exhorts in 1Th 5:20-22 Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.
 - c. the contrast is to be vulnerable to satanic deception - **Mt 3:19; 2 Co 4:4; 11:3; 2 Th 2:9**
3. Satan's Basic Strategy
 - a. attacking truth began in the garden w/ a three prong attack - **Ge 3:1-6**
 - i. Caused **doubt** on God's word - vs 1
 - ii. **Denied** what God said to Adam - vs 4
 - iii. **Distorted** what God said - vs 5
 - b. People live according to what they believe
 - i. reason why we are commanded to be transformed in our thinking - **Ro 12:2; Eph 1:18; 4:23; 5:10,17; Col 3:1-4; 1Pe 1:14; 3:15; 1Jo 2:15**
 - ii. What we believe shapes what we want and how we live - **Ge 3:6; Jas 1:14; 4:1-4**

B. The Command - vs 1a

1. transition from the work of the Holy Spirit (3:24) to the work of unholy spirits - **1 Th 5:20-22**
2. do not believe
 - a. Imp. form of believe w/ the negative particle
 - b. indicates the forbidding of an action already underway,
 - i. lit. "stop believing"
 - ii. They were uncritically accepting the message of the false teachers - **Ac 17:11**

C. The Reason - vs 1b

1. but test the spirits, whether they are of God;
 - a. pres. tense Imp. indicate a continual activity
 - b. nothing to do w/ demons, but used of testing the purity of metals
 - c. believers should continually evaluate what they see, hear, and read to determine its spiritual origin - 1 Th 5:20-22
 - d. the only way to reliably test any teaching is to measure it to what is revealed in God's infallible written word - **Isa 8:20**
2. because many false prophets have gone out into the world.
 - a. The urgency of John's command shown w/ "many false prophets"
 - b. Satan doesn't just want
 - i. to oppose the church - Ac 5:3; 13:8-10; 16:16-23; 2 Th 2:18
 - ii. he wants to deceive her - 2 Co 11:14 appears as an angel of light
 - c. to ignore this warning is to do so at one's own peril

D. The Guidelines - vs 2-6

1. The Confession of the Divine Lord - vs 2-3

- a. theological /Christological - what one believes and teaches about Jesus Christ
- b. Every spirit that confesses
 - i. referring to human teachers
 - ii. confesses - Pres. Act. Ind
 - **homologeō** - to say the same thing - as Scripture
 - that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God - **1Co 12:3; 1Jo 5:4**
 - that Jesus is 100% God 100% Man - **Phil 2:7-8; Heb 2:14, 17; 4:15**
- c. and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh
 - i. those that teach different - are “not of God” a rejection of Him - **2Pe 2:1**
 - ii. And this is the spirit of the Antichrist - as evidence w/ false religion - **2:18,22; 2 Th 2:3-4,8-9**
 - iii. which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world. - **2Th 2:7**

2. The Possession of the Divine Life - vs 4-5

- a. You are of God, little children,
 - i. regeneration allows the believer to participate in the divine nature - 2 Pe 1:4
 - ii. The believer also has security against false teaching - **Jo 15:19; 17:14**
 - and have overcome them,
 - because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. - **1Co 2:12-16; 1Jo 5:4**
- b. They are of the world. – the false teachers
 - i. Therefore they speak as of the world, - **1 Co 2:14; 1 Jo 2:15**
 - ii. and the world hears them. -

3. The Profession of the Divine Law - vs 6

- a. In contrast to the false teachers and their followers - We are of God.
 - i. We refers to John and the other teachers of truth
 - ii. He who knows God hears us - **Jo 8:47; 10:4-5,16, 26-27; 14:26; 18:37**
 - iii. he who is not of God does not hear us.
 - **akouō** - to hear (in various senses):--give (in the) audience (of), come (to the ears), (shall) hear(-er, -ken), be noised, be reported, understand.
 - they are not hearing, understanding what God has said in Scripture
- b. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.
 - i. We are transformed by the Scripture - Ro 12:2
 - ii. We are We are equipped to live for God’s glory by the word of God - 2 Ti 3:16-17
 - iii. we know and judge all things by the Scripture - Heb 5:12-14
 - iv. We have all that we need for life and godliness - 2 Pe 1:4, 19
 - v. we need to be Bereans - Ac 17:11